Establishing a Physical Space that Promotes Self-Regulation
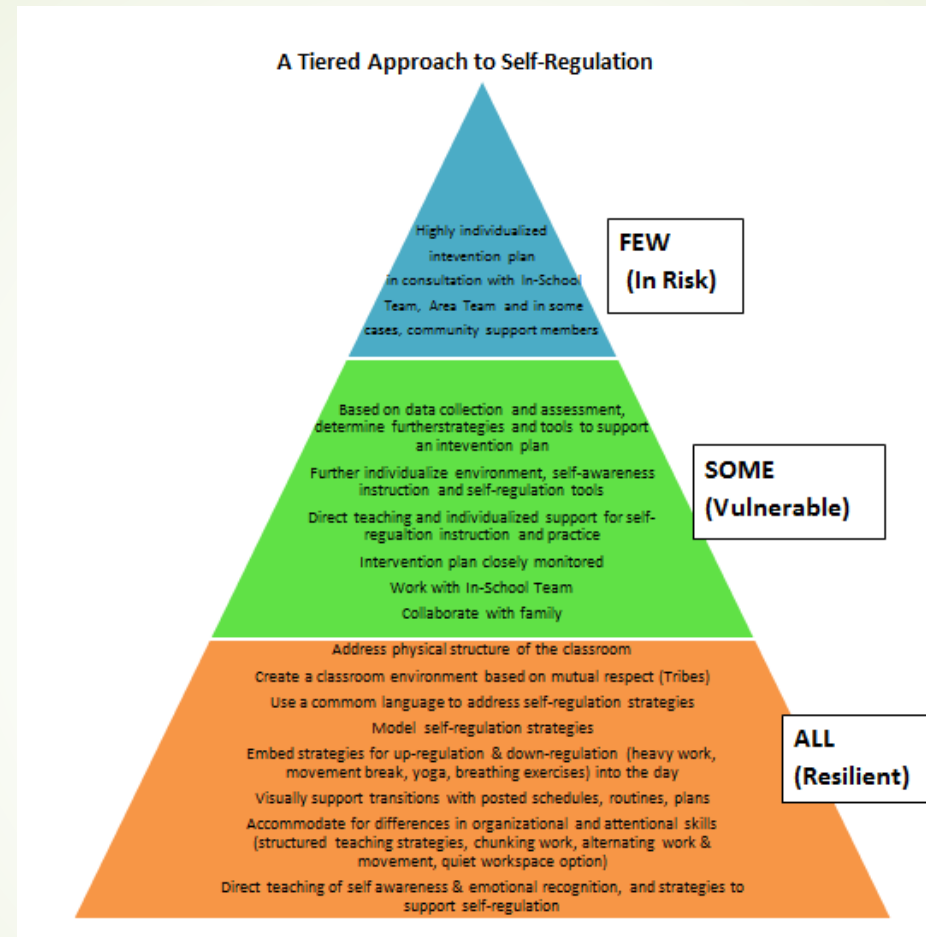
Created By: LisaMarie St. John (SERT-Forest View Public School) & Erin Elmhurst (Principal- Forest View Public School)
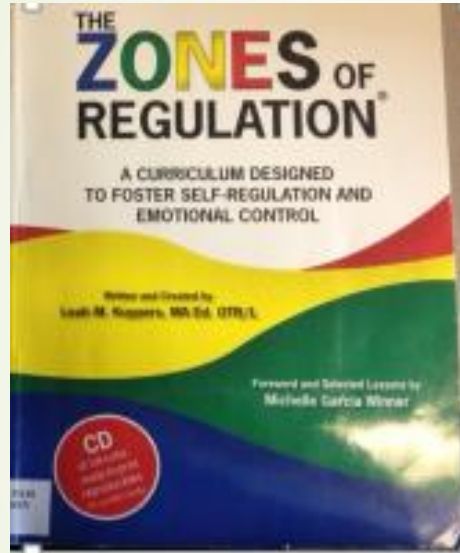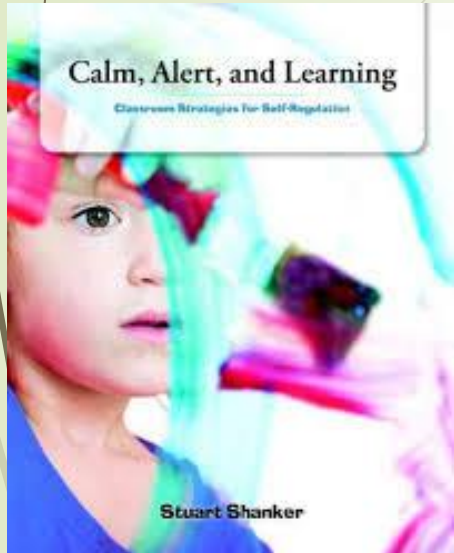
Tier One planning to support self-regulation for all students

A Tiered Approach to Self-Regulation

- "What is in a space, a room or a yard, and how it is arranged can affect the behaviour of people; it can make it easier to act in certain kinds of ways, harder to act in others…"

  - Anna Pairman and Lisa Terreni (DDSB)

Forest View Public School, 2015

Research & Resources

If the environment is the third teacher what language does she speak?

Ann Pairman and Lisa Terreni

- All four resources are interconnected in their research results and practical strategies for the classroom

- If we think carefully before we set up our physical environment (classroom, gym, library, office, yard etc) we can begin to set the stage for improved self-regulation and independence in our students and in ourselves

TEACCH Autism Program
University of North Carolina School of Medicine

The Environment

- According to research quoted in *Calm, Alert and Learning* by Stuart Shanker, "Regulating a child involves modulating the intensity of stimuli in order to engage and sustain the child's attention"

- Some children have internalized regulating techniques and have the capacity to self-regulate; however, many students will require some level of external regulation to become better able to self-regulate

- Using a planned, structured approach to the physical environment of the classroom and school will help to modulate the "stimuli" that students receive and support self-regulation and, therefore, readiness to learn

(Shanker, 2013)

What can we do?

Practical strategies for the classroom and school

Main Resource: **The Biological Domain**, *Calm, Alert and Learning* by Stuart Shanker, 2013

Visual Environment

- Keep clutter to a minimum and cover or store unused resources
- This helps keep visual distractions to a minimum and makes it easier for students to focus on the important information

Use labelled bins to organize items and to assist students in their independence when cleaning or handing in work

A table cloth is used to cover a shelf holding teacher resources/items not being used

Visual Environment:
The walls

- Limit extraneous visual materials

- Avoid bright commercially made borders, posters, mobiles

- Include areas of "quiet" on the walls as well as areas for student work & learning tools

- Consider using data projector to display information for lessons/work

- Use basic, natural light colours (cream, tan, grey)

- Use natural light as much as possible

Forest
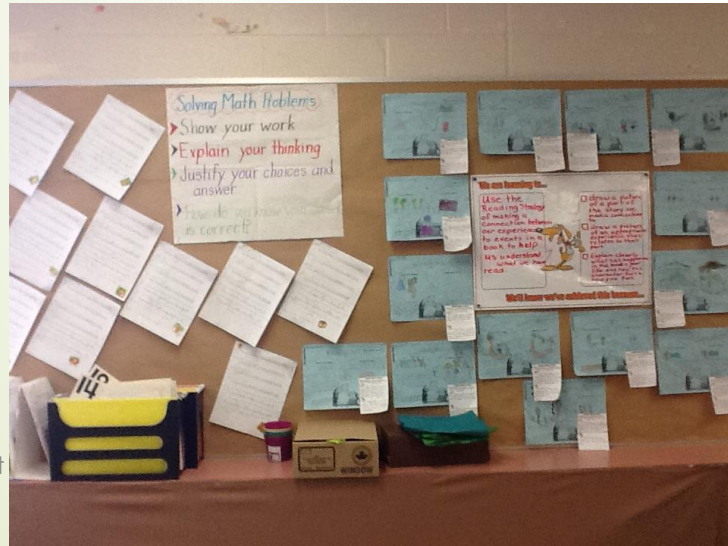
Auditory environment

- Cover the bottom of desk and chair legs with tennis balls or felt glides
- Avoid the use of noisy fans, turn off computers when not in use
- Arrange your classroom so that noisy activities are in one area
- Create an area in the classroom for quiet activities and a calming area for when students need to take a break from the classroom activities
- Use a specific sound to signify class transitions (drum, chime, music, singing bowls, clapping pattern etc)

Forest View Pu

Physical environment

- Use the furniture and visual cues in the classroom effectively to visually answer for students, **"What happens here?"**

- This visual clarity can assist in reducing confusion and anxiety and increase independence by helping students understand what is expected of them; children operating in areas with clear boundaries also tend to experience greater attention to task

- Create areas in your classroom that are clearly defined by the furniture and boundaries and answer for the students "What happens here?"
  - Examples of areas to create are: group activity area, individual "office" work areas, quiet area, computer area, leisure area, transition area, calming area

- Spaces and pathways: it should be visually clear how students move from one area of the classroom to the other

Forest View Public School, 2015

Physical space: examples

1. Guided reading tables visually tell the student that the teacher will be working with 4 to 5 students

2. A quiet area with one bean bag chair and a fidget box with a divider visually tells the students that only one person will be in the area at a time and the divider tells the students to give the person some space

3. Work alone or "office" area tells the student that it is time to work alone and focus on the work in front of me, it also tells the other students to leave the working student alone

4. A play center with 4 spaces for student pictures visually tells the students that only 4 students can be at the center and your picture has to be placed there to play there

Student & Class Learning Profiles

- Using the information you collect in the first few weeks of school determine the most effective classroom management & self-regulation strategies for your class and individual students:

  - Monitor what times of the day your students require movement breaks, or focussing games such a Simon says to help regulate and be ready to learn

  - Consider introducing a classroom fidget box that students can access independently or be directed to by an adult to assist in staying focussed and alert

  - Note the students who may need more frequent or individualized strategies and make a plan for supporting their self-regulation

  - Offer options for work time: sitting, standing, physio ball chair, wiggle seat

- Keep your classroom schedule visually posted and refer to it throughout the day to help students anticipate transitions

- Make self-regulation techniques obvious to your students using age appropriate vocabulary to help them understand and internalize the concept

Forest View Public School, 2015

Fidget box ideas

- Stress ball
- Squishy toy
- Hair band/elastics
- Worry beads
- Exercise bands
- Wiggle cushion
- Textured material squares
- http://www.pinterest.com/explore/fidget-toys/

*Through observation you can determine what works for your class and students; what increases attention and what is distracting

Assess the effectiveness of the third teacher: physical environment

- Does the room arrangement clarify expectations, routines, and activities?

- Does the room arrangement maximize student attention, and reduce distractions?

- Does the environment take into account the learning needs related to my students?

- Have I considered physical arrangements in other settings in the school (gym, computer room, integration, assemblies)?

- Does the environment promote student independence?

- Am I monitoring regularly to make ongoing adjustments?

References

- Shanker, S. (2013). *Calm, alert, and learning: Classroom strategies for self-regulation*. Don Mills, Ontario: Pearson.

- Ministry of Education; Student Achievement Division. (2012). *The Third Teacher*. Capacity Building Series: Special Addition #27.

- Kuypers, L. (2011). *Zones of Regulation*. San Jose, California; Think Social Publishing Inc.

- DDSB Structured Teaching In-service, Day 1

- DDSB presentation. *If the Environment is the Third Teacher What Language does she Speak?* By Anna Pairman and Lisa Terreni